

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-30

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R 131105Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0795

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 7106

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR FOR THE SECRETARY AND ASST SECRETARY HABIB

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LA
SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION THAT SECRETARY SEE LAO MINISTER
PHOUMI VINGVICHIT

1. PHOUMI VONGVICHIT IS LEAVING SEPTEMBER 14 FOR NEW YORK.
HE WILL REACH THERE AROUND SEPTEMBER 19 AFTER STOPPING OFF
IN FRANCE TO CONSULT PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA, AND
ONLY PLANS TO STAY FOR ABOUT TEN DAYS.

2. AS YOU KNOW, PHOUMI IS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MIN-
ISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF
NATIONAL UNION (PGNU). HE IS THE THIRD RANKING MEMBER
OF THE LAO PEOPLES' PARTY WHICH CONTROLS THE LAO PATRIOTIC
FRONT AND IS THE SENIOR LPF REPRESENTATIVE IN VIENTIANE.
IT WILL BE PHOUMI'S FIRST VISIT TO THE U.S. SINCE 1963,
AND IT WILL BE THE FIRST CONTACT OF A SENIOR PATHET LAO
REP WITH THE U.S. SINCE THEN. ALTHOUGH WITH SOUVANNA
CONVALESCING IN FRANCE AUTHORITY HERE RESIDES IN A
"DUUMVIRATE," PHOUMI IS FIRST AMONG EQUALS AND IS
INCLINED TO THINK OF HIMSELF AS ACTING PRIME MINISTER.

3. PHOUMI LOOKS AND ACTS LIKE THE ABBOT OF A PARTICU-
LARLY BENIGN ORDER OF BUDDHIST MONKS. SOFT-SPOKEN,
GENTLE AND THOUGHTFUL, HE IS A FAR CRY FROM THE POPULAR
CONCEPT OF A TOUGH, STUBBORN, ASIAN REVOLUTIONARY LEADER.

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I HAVE FOUND HIM COURTEOUS, WILLING TO LISTEN AND NOT PRONE TO

COMMUNIST JARGON. ALTHOUGH HE HEWS RIGIDLY TO POSITIONS ESTABLISHED BY SAM NEUA WHERE HARDCORE LEADERSHIP REMAINS, THE LEADERSHIP IN VIENTIANE APPEARS TO HAVE LOST SOME OF ITS EARLY MILITANCY AND PARANOIA AND I BELIEVE WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN MOVING THE PATHET LAO MEASURABLY TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF THE BONAFIDES OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD LAOS AND RECOGNITION OF OUR ROLE HERE.

4. MY LOCALITY DOES NOT BIND ME TO THE LIMITED SIGNIFICANCE OF LAOS ON THE WORLD SCENE, BUT THERE IS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN REAL PROGRESS IN BRINGING THE INDOCHINA WAR TO AN END IN THIS THEATER AND THAT POLITICAL ACCOMODATION -- HOWEVER HALTING AND SLOW -- IS BEING ACHIEVED HERE WITH OUR HELP. FOR THIS REASON I TAKE THE LIBERTY OF URGING THAT YOU SEE PHOUMI IN NEW YORK. EVEN A SHORT TALK WITH YOU WOULD SERVE TO REAFFIRM THAT THE U.S. IS INDEED PREPARED TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN INDOCHINA. THROUGH PHOUMI THIS REAFFIRMATION WOULD BE HEARD AT LEAST IN SAM NEUA AND HANOI.

5. IF YOU AGREE TO SEE HIM, THESE ARE THE POINTS WE WOULD RECOMMEND YOU MAKE:

A. YOU MIGHT EXPRESS DEEP SATISFACTION AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE VIENTIANE ACCORDS; AT THE FORMATION OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT AND ITS SUCCESSFUL OPERATION; AND AT THE MAINTENANCE OF A CEASE-FIRE FOR 18 MONTHS. THE LAO ARE PROVING THAT POLITICAL DIFFERENCES CAN BE RESOLVED BY NEGOTIATION RATHER THAN BY FORCE OF ARMS.

B. IN THE CONTEXT OF INDOCHINA, THE SUCCESS OF THE LAO EFFORT IS OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE. IN VIETNAM THE U.S. CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS, AND IN CAMBODIA THE U.S. STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE GKR'S PROPOSAL FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT CONDITIONS. THE U.S. IS NOT WEDDED TO ANY FORM OF GOVERNMENT THAT MIGHT EMERGE FROM POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT PEOPLE BE FREE TO CHOOSE THE GOVERNMENT THEY WANT WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE

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AND THAT PEACE BE RESTORED THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

C. YOU WILL OF COURSE WISH TO AFFIRM OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE PGNU AND PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA'S POLICY OF PEACE, INDEPENDENCE, NEUTRALITY AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. IN THIS RESPECT THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO CONTINUE PROVIDING ASSISTANCE AND TO ADJUST ITS AID PROGRAM TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES PARTICULARLY TAKING

INTO ACCOUNT THE ASSISTANCE THAT THE PGNU MAY RECEIVE FROM OTHER DONOR COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES. IT WOULD BE GOOD TO EMPHASIZE HOWEVER THAT THE U.S. ALSO CONFRONTS SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THAT IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE PGNU ENSURE CLOSE COORDINATION OF ALL ASSISTANCE IN ORDER THAT LAOS DERIVE THE MAXIMUM BENEFIT.

D. IT IS IMPORTANT TO AFFIRM THAT ALTHOUGH THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO DO ITS SHARE TO HELP LAOS ACHIEVE ITS NATIONAL GOALS THE CONTINUING BASELESS ATTACKS AGAINST THE U.S. BY RADIO PATHET LAO, THE DELAYED RETURN OF CIVILIAN PRISONER EMMET KAY, THE DETENTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS (GIBSON) IN VIOLATION OF LAO LAWS, ARE THE KINDS OF ACTIONS WHICH DO NOT HELP CREATE A CLIMATE OF CONFIDENCE.

E. (ASSUMING THAT EMMET KAY IS RELEASED PRIOR TO A OUR MEETING YOU MIGHT) NOTE WITH SATISFACTION THE FACT OF THE RELEASE, HOWEVER DELAYED, AND OUR EXPECTATION THAT THE PGNU WILL NOW PROCEED PROMPTLY WITH THE NEXT STEP, THE EXCHANGE OF LISTS OF MIAS, AS STIPULATED IN THE ACCORDS.

6. PHOUMI FOR HIS PART MAY BE EXPECTED TO PLACE GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE. AS YOU KNOW, THE PGNU IS SENDING TWO MISSIONS WITH BEGGING BOWLS TO MANY COUNTRIES. WE HAVE DISCOURAGED THEIR ANTICIPATING MORE AID FROM US AND HAVE MADE THE POINT THAT THERE IS AN ORDERLY PROCEDURE FOR PROVIDING THIS AID AND THAT WE EXPECT CONGRESS WILL APPROPRIATE SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO PERMIT THE MAINTENANCE OF PRESENT ECONOMIC AID LEVELS. (NOTE: I HAVE NEVER DISCUSSED MAP LEVELS WITH PHOUMI BUT HAVE STRESSED THAT WE DO NOT PROVIDE TANKS, SECRET

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GUNS AND PLANES. OUR PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO ASSURE STABILITY IN THE KINGDOM PENDING THE REINTEGRATION OF PL FORCES INTO FAR.)

7. FINALLY, WHILE I BELIEVE PHOUMI WILL STICK TO EXPLAINING THE IMPORTANCE THE PGNU ATTACHES TO PEACE, NEUTRALITY AND FRIENDSHIP WITH ALL COUNTRIES, HE JUST MIGHT RAISE THE QUESTION OF U.S. ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES RETURNING TO THEIR HOMES IN THE "LIBERATED" ZONE. YOU MIGHT REPLY THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO HELP AND HOPE THAT OTHER COUNTRIES WILL HELP ALSO.

8. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER PHIL HABIB WILL BE IN NEW YORK, BUT IT WOULD BE GOOD IF PHOUMI COULD ALSO MEET WITH HIM AT SOME POINT.

WHITEHOUSE

SECRET

NNN

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